

**MINUTES FOR THE MARCH 26, 2024  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE SSJID BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The Board of Directors of the South San Joaquin Irrigation District (SSJID) met in person in regular session in the District Boardroom at 9:00 a.m., with public access provided via the online Zoom meeting platform. President Weststeyn called the meeting to order. Director Kamper led the flag salute. Upon roll call the following members were noted present:

DIRECTORS:           HOLBROOK KAMPER ROOS SPYKSMA WESTSTEYN  
ABSENT:               NONE

Also present were General Manager Peter M. Rietkerk, General Counsel Mia Brown, Engineering Department Manager Forrest Killingsworth, and Clerk of the Board Danielle Barney.

**Public Comment** – None

**CONSENT CALENDAR**

- A. Approval of Checks in the amount of \$395,651.01; Accounts Payable Wires in the amount of \$843,629.25; and Payroll dated March 22, 2024 in the amount of \$302,130.80, and March 22, 2024 in the amount of \$3,716.35.
- B. Approval of the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of March 12, 2024

President Weststeyn referenced the Board motion for Item #8 – Consider Authorization for the General Manager to Amend the Terms of the Temporary Staff Services Agreement Provided by SSJID to the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority and noted that language regarding an hourly rate, for SSJID Water Resources Coordinator Brandon Nakagawa, should be omitted as it was merely discussion and not to be included in the Board action.

- C. Approval of Consent to SSJID’s Entry of Property to Read and to Maintain Flow Meter, APN 226-100-30
- D. Approval of Amendment to Temporary Construction Easement (TCE) Agreement Granted to Pacific Gas & Electric for the Bellota-Warnerville Reconductoring Project, Extending the Term of the TCE “Additional Area” to April 30, 2024

Ms. Mia Brown, SSJID General Counsel, addressed the Board and provided background of SSJID entering into a Temporary Construction Easement Agreement (Agreement) with Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) in November 2021, to utilize part of the Robert O. Schulz Solar Farm (Solar Farm) property for staging and equipment for its Bellota-Warnerville Reconductoring Project; Amendment No. 1 whereby PG&E requested additional space; and Amendment No. 2 whereby PG&E requested an extension on the term through January 31, 2024. PG&E has not yet vacated the premises and returned it to its original condition, and has requested an extension of the term to April 30, 2024 (Amendment No. 3).

Ms. Brown stated that no other terms or conditions of the Agreement are affected by the proposed Amendment.

- E. Financial Statements through February 2024
- F. Investment Report for January and February 2024

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Director Holbrook and seconded by Director Kamper to approve the Consent Calendar as amended.

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The motion passed 5 to 0 by the following vote:

AYES:	HOLBROOK KAMPER ROOS SPYKSMA WESTSTEYN
NOES:	NONE
ABSTAIN:	NONE
ABSENT:	NONE

**COMMUNICATIONS**

**Item #1 – Directors’ Reports**

Director Holbrook stated that there were no updates to report.

Director Spyksma stated that it was good to observe water in the canals and to kick off irrigation season. He noted that his first delivery was on time and the water was very clean.

Director Kamper addressed Mr. Frank Avila, SSJID Irrigation Operations Manager, and inquired about crews working on Louise Avenue at Prescott Road, to which Mr. Avila responded that repair work was being done on identified leaks.

Director Roos addressed Mr. Avila, thanked him for his service, and wished him a happy retirement.

President Weststeyn noted that he had calls and/or meetings with various customers and would discuss further in Closed Session.

**Item #2 – Various Reports**

Director Holbrook addressed Mr. Bill Schwandt, SSJID Electric Utility Manager, and requested status of the Solar Farm project. Mr. Schwandt stated that progress on repowering the north section is going well, and installation of all new solar panels on that section should be completed by March 29. He added that the next steps will be electrical work on the north section to be completed by June 30, and to initiate remodeling of the next two (2) sections in October 2024. Board discussion included the condition of the wire being pulled and replaced; adding more solar panels to optimize power output; the maximum number of panels allowed per SSJID’s contract with PG&E; and to keep the replaced panels and inverters in storage as backup.

Director Holbrook addressed Mr. Ed Erisman, Water Treatment Plant (WTP) Manager, referenced the WTP Manager’s Report dated March 26, 2024, Items #3 and #4, and noted the amount of District funds saved with in-house service and repairs by WTP crews. He commended and thanked Mr. Erisman and WTP staff for a job well done.

Director Holbrook addressed Ms. Sonya Williams, SSJID Finance and Administration Manager, referenced the Financial Statement dated February 29, 2024, and noted Ms. Williams’ financial management resulting in the Reserve Balance Total exceeding \$100,000,000.00 in February.

Director Holbrook addressed Mr. Forrest Killingsworth, SSJID Engineering Department Manager, thanked him for the pictures sent of the Joint Supply Canal Long Tunnel Upstream Portal Improvements Project, and inquired about the status of the Canyon Tunnel Project. Mr. Killingsworth stated that the project is moving swiftly, and that staff remains busy with design, landowner negotiations, and the appraisal process. He added that an update, and a request for Board approval of the next phase of work to be completed will be presented at the next board meeting.

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Director Spyksma addressed Mr. Nakagawa and requested status of SSJID’s joint participation with Stockton East Water District (SEWD), and North San Joaquin Water Conservation District (NSJWCD) in the California Department of Food and Agriculture “State Water Efficiency & Enhancement Program” (SWEEP) Grant to assist farmers and ranchers invest in water and energy savings improvements to their irrigation systems. Mr. Nakagawa responded that there have been a lot of inquiries, many calls are being fielded by SEWD and San Joaquin Farm Bureau (SJFB), and a majority of SSJID customer applications pertain to solar panels and soil moisture sensors.

Mr. Nakagawa updated the Board on a grant awarded to the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority (ESJGWA) in 2021, to drill wells to obtain groundwater data in the Delta region. Arrangements were made with the San Joaquin County (SJC) Parks & Recreation Department to commence drilling on March 1, the drilling company was denied access pending resolution of concerns, and drilling was postponed. Mr. Nakagawa noted that the grant required projects be completed by April 12, and that discussions are being held with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) regarding an extension to complete the groundwater well project. The driller indicated that there was no possibility that the April 12 deadline could be met. Board discussion included consequences for missing the completion deadline, data gaps, and funding the well drilling with other grant awards.

Mr. Peter Rietkerk, SSJID General Manager, reported that East Stanislaus Resource Conservation District (ESRCD), in collaboration with SSJID, Cramer Fish Sciences, FISHBIO, and cbec eco engineering, submitted a grant application in response to the Bureau of Reclamation’s (Reclamation) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for habitat restoration funding. The total requested funds for the project package are approximately \$9.2 million, with a response to the application anticipated by November 2024.

Mr. Rietkerk reported that SSJID submitted a concept proposal to California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) for the design component of the Honolulu Bar Phase II Project and met with representatives of CDFW on March 21, to discuss the project, seek input, and get more information regarding the full application process for the Fisheries Restoration Grant Program.

Mr. Rietkerk reported that he attended a luncheon, hosted by Mr. Dave Eggerton, Executive Director of the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA), which also included the General Managers from Oakdale Irrigation District, Del Puerto Water District, Patterson Irrigation District, Modesto Irrigation District, and Turlock Irrigation District. Discussions at the high-level meeting were productive and included agriculture representation, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), and water rights.

Director Spyksma reported that discussions at the Tri-Dam Board meeting, on March 21, included Tri-Dam’s current health care insurance provided by ACWA and consideration to switch coverage to the Special District Risk Management Authority (SDRMA). He added that SDRMA currently provides Tri-Dam’s Workers Compensation insurance.

**ACTION CALENDAR**

**Item #3 – Consider Adoption of Resolution No. 24-08-H In Appreciation of Frank Avila’s Service**

Mr. Rietkerk addressed the Board and thanked President Weststeyn for his willingness to consider adoption of Resolution 24-08-H to show appreciation for SSJID Irrigation Operations Manager Frank Avila and recognize his contributions to the District. He noted Mr. Avila’s thirty-seven (37) years of service with SSJID, and highlighted his great team mentorship, natural leadership ability, innovative contributions to the District’s technology and infrastructure, and his commitment to continuous personal and professional improvement and learning.

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Mr. Rietkerk read aloud Resolution No. 24-08-H In Appreciation of Frank Avila's Service.

Mr. Avila addressed the Board and thanked them for welcoming and supporting him over the years, and expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the opportunities provided in his career. He stated that he is leaving the District with excellent leadership of a great irrigation team, but that it's time to "pass the baton to the younger generation."

**MOTION:** A motion was made by Director Kamper and seconded by Director Holbrook to adopt Resolution 24-08-H In Appreciation of Frank Avila's Service.

**SOUTH SAN JOAQUIN IRRIGATION DISTRICT  
RESOLUTION NO. 24-08-H**

**IN APPRECIATION OF FRANK AVILA'S SERVICE**

**WHEREAS**, Frank Avila began his career with the South San Joaquin Irrigation District (SSJID or District) on April 27, 1987; and

**WHEREAS**, through hard work, ambition, and ongoing commitment to personal and professional development, Mr. Avila ascended through the ranks at SSJID, starting first as a Division Manager and Maintenance employee. From there, he was promoted to a Main Distribution Canal Operator, then Assistant Water Supervisor; then Telemetry Systems Supervisor, finally advancing to his current role as Irrigation Operations Manager, having overall responsibility of SSJID's irrigation distribution system; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Avila's achievements and contributions to the betterment of SSJID during his tenure are numerous, and include:

- A. Leading SSJID's irrigation operations into the modern age, through the implementation of a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system, automation of the District's Main Canal check structures, remote monitoring and automation of numerous control sites throughout the District, and deployment of SCADA tools to irrigation operations staff; and
- B. Development and implementation of SSJID's Microwave Radio System, providing enhanced communication and reliability for SSJID irrigation and Nick DeGroot Water Treatment Plant operations; and
- C. Participation in the District's Strategic Planning efforts in 2016 and 2024, contributing to and implementing a new mission, vision, and values, and strategic plans and actions that will continue to guide the District's operations for years to come; and
- D. Successful coordination of SSJID irrigation, Woodward Reservoir, and power operations with numerous agencies, including Oakdale Irrigation District, Tri-Dam Project, Western Area Power Administration, and Turlock Irrigation District; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Avila's operational expertise has been invaluable in advising the General Manager, and Board of Directors in its efforts to modernize and automate SSJID's delivery of irrigation water, and promoting a supportive and service-oriented culture; and

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**WHEREAS**, Mr. Avila’s history and experience with SSJID, his “can-do” attitude, continuous commitment to learning and improvement, and innovative problem-solving style, has made Mr. Avila a sought-after advisor for the Board and staff in many areas of SSJID’s operations; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Avila will always be remembered for his responsiveness to customers and co-workers; leadership of project and department teams; his mentorship and education of numerous SSJID employees through the years; his innovative solutions; his loyalty and commitment to the District, and his ‘Frank-isms’ (which usually involve a commonly known saying, delivered with a Portuguese twist); and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Directors of South San Joaquin Irrigation District wishes to express its deep appreciation and gratitude for the devoted service that Mr. Avila has given to the District, its operations, customers, and constituents.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the District hereby publicly commends Frank Avila for his service to the South San Joaquin Irrigation District.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board of Directors and all of the District’s employees wish Frank Avila a long, happy and healthy retirement.

**PASSED AND ADOPTED** this 26<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2024, by the following vote:

AYES:	HOLBROOK KAMPER ROOS SPYKSMA WESTSTEYN
NOES:	NONE
ABSTAIN:	NONE
ABSENT:	NONE

*It was announced that all remaining items on the Closed Session agenda would be discussed. The Board took a brief recess at 9:40 a.m. and convened to Closed Session at 9:50 a.m.*

**Item #4 – CLOSED SESSION**

**RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

*The Board returned to Open Session at 12:55 p.m.*

**Item #5 – ANNOUNCEMENT OF REPORTABLE ACTION TAKEN IN CLOSED SESSION**

Disclosure of reportable actions taken in Closed Session, pursuant to Government Code Section 54957.1:  
There were no reportable actions taken in Closed Session.

**Item #6 – ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 12:56 p.m.

**ATTEST:**

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Danielle Barney, Clerk of the Board